

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

**Telecommunications Division
Market Structure Branch**

**RESOLUTION T-16600
December 11, 2001**

R E S O L U T I O N

RESOLUTION T-16600. CITIZENS TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY OF CALIFORNIA INCORPORATED (U-1024-C). REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF PRICE CAP MECHANISM, IN COMPLIANCE WITH DECISION 89-10-031 AND DECISION 94-09-065, AND CORRESPONDING ADJUSTMENTS TO SURCHARGES WHICH WILL BE EFFECTIVE ON JANUARY 1, 2002.

BY ADVICE LETTER NO. 719 FILED ON OCTOBER 2, 2001.

SUMMARY

This Resolution authorizes Citizens Telecommunications Company of California, Inc. (Citizens) to increase its annual revenue by \$390,650 effective January 1, 2002. This increase implements Citizens' 2002 annual price cap index filing as filed in Advice Letter No. 719. The adopted revenue adjustments and surcharge/surcredit changes are shown in Appendices A and B attached to this resolution. The revisions to Citizens' price floors to reflect the changes in the inflation factor are adopted as filed and are effective January 1, 2001.

Advice Letter No. 719 requested an increase in revenue of \$390,650 due to the impacts of ongoing Z-factor adjustments for Universal Service Fund payments, an ongoing payphone deregulation reduction, and an ongoing reduction in Other Billing and Collection (OB&C).

BACKGROUND

New Regulatory Framework

In Decision (D.) 96-12-054 the Commission adopted an incentive-based regulatory framework (called the new regulatory framework or "NRF") for Citizens based on the NRF adopted for SBC Pacific Bell Telephone Company (Pacific) and GTE California Incorporated (GTEC), which is now known as Verizon California Incorporated. Ordering

Paragraph (O.P.) 2 of D.96-12-054, grants Citizens, petition for modification of D.95-11-024. In the revised O.P. 6 of D.96-12-054 the Commission ordered that:

Regulation of Citizens operations shall follow the principles of the new regulatory framework (NRF) established in D.89-10-031 (33 CPUC2d 43), D.94-06-011 (55 CPUC2d 1), and D.94-09-065 (56 CPUC2d 117) subject to the following differences... Earnings between the benchmark and ceiling rates of return shall be shared equally between shareholders and ratepayers. The “x” factor in the NRF formula for Citizens shall be 4.0%, with the gross domestic product price index minus X portion of the formula suspended.

In D.89-10-031, we originally adopted an incentive-based regulatory framework for Pacific and GTEC. In that decision, the Commission stated:

This new regulatory framework is centered in a price cap indexing mechanism with sharing of excess earning above a benchmark rate of return level...

Following a startup revenue adjustment (given in D.89-12-048), ...prices for the utilities’ basic monopoly services and rate caps for flexibly priced services will be indexed annually according to the Gross national Product Price Index (GNP-PI) inflation index reduced by a productivity adjustment of 4.5%.

The indexing formula also allows for rate adjustments for a limited category of exogenous factors whose effects will not be reflected in the economy-wide GNP-PI. While all such costs cannot be foreseen completely, we recognize that the following factors (called Z-factors): changes in federal and state tax laws to the extent they affect the local exchange carriers disproportionately, mandated jurisdictional separations changes, and changes to intraLATA toll pooling arrangements or accounting procedures adopted by this Commission.

However, the Commission did not authorize Z-factor treatment for all unforeseen or exogenous factors. In D.89-10-031, the Commission stated that:

...Normal costs of doing business (including costs of complying with existing regulatory requirements) or general economic conditions would be excluded as Z-factor items.

Since D.89-10-031, the Commission has subsequently issued several decisions modifying the NRF program. In D.93-09-038, the Commission ordered GTEC to replace the GNP-PI with the Gross Domestic Product Price Index (GDP-PI) commencing with GTEC's 1994 price cap filing. The Commission, in D.94-06-011, also ordered Pacific to replace the GNP-PI with the GDP-PI commencing with Pacific's 1995 price cap filing. In D.94-09-065, the Commission authorized Pacific and GTEC to implement the 1995 price cap rate adjustments through the billing surcharge/surcredit mechanism. O.P. 1 of D.95-11-024 requires Citizens to "file revised tariffs consistent with this decision, the revenue requirement and revenues in Appendix C (surcharges/surcredits) and the rates in Appendix E."

Citizens filed for a review of its NRF in March 1999. In D.00-03-040, the Commission approved a settlement agreement between Citizens and the Commission's Office of Ratepayer Advocates (ORA) regarding revisions to Citizens' NRF. Under the settlement, reporting requirements are modified, the Service Quality Assurance Mechanism (SQAM) and depreciation filings are eliminated, three on-going Z-Factors are kept while all others are eliminated, and suspension of the GDP-PI minus productivity factor formula is continued.

Citizens' Price Cap Filing

On October 2, 2001 Citizens filed Advice Letter No. 719 requesting billing surcharge/surcredit changes to be effective January 1, 2002 in order to implement the certain ongoing adjustments for 2002.

Citizens' 2002 price cap filing consists of proposed revenue adjustments for:

- 1. Interstate High Cost Fund Recovery** **\$ 465,938**
An ongoing Z-Factor adjustment that reflects the difference between the final USF expense payments to be received from the National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA) applicable to 1996 and the expected USF payments to be received from NECA applicable to 2001.
- 2. NECA High Cost Fund True-Up** **\$ 277,626**
An ongoing Z-Factor adjustment that reflects true-ups to the USF High Cost Program recognized in 2001, due to revised numbers filed by USF recipients which impact the entire fund.

3. Payphone Deregulation Adjustment \$(186,051)

An ongoing Z-Factor adjustment that reflects the impact of payphone deregulation.

4. Impact of OB&C Order #80-286 \$(166,863)

An ongoing Z-Factor adjustment that reflects the impact of the transfer of the common line, traffic sensitive and special access charges.

Citizens requests a total revenue increase of \$390,650 to become effective on January 1, 2002. Citizens used an annualized billing base of \$42,456,983 for calculating the surcharge/surcredit effective January 1, 2002. For the purpose of adjusting its price floors, Citizens proposes a GDP-PI Factor of 2.30%, which reflects the adjusted rate of inflation between the second quarters of 2000 and 2001. Citizens based its GDP-PI Implicit Price Deflator on data obtained from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

As shown above, the net result of ongoing Z-Factor adjustments is an increase of \$390,650 above Citizens' 1996 base year revenues. Because the prior year's impact of this Z-Factor is due to expire at year-end 2001, the net surcharge/surcredit impact from this Z-Factor adjustment is not necessarily higher than last year and represents a decrease for Local Exchange Services for 2002. Citizens requests authorization to modify:

1. The current surcharge to be applied to all Local Exchange Services with the exceptions of Category III Services and the taxes and surcharges currently listed in the tariffs from 3.40% to 1.30%.
2. The current surcredit to all intraLATA toll in the Schedule Cal. P.U.C. No. A9 from -0.65% to -0.55%.
3. The current surcredit to all Access Services listed in the Schedule Cal. P.U.C. No. 1-T from -0.65% to -0.55%.

NOTICE/PROTESTS

Citizens stated that a copy of the advice letter, and related tariff sheets were mailed to all interested utilities and/or parties. Notice of Advice Letter No. 719 was published in the Commission Daily Calendar on October 3, 2001.

No protests were filed.

DISCUSSION

Interstate High Cost Fund Recovery

Citizens Advice Letter No. 719 included a \$465,938 Z-Factor adjustment to reflect reduced recovery from the Interstate High Cost Fund (IHCF). The IHCF is administered by NECA and is intended to preserve universal service by providing offsetting support to the cost of the local loop in high cost areas.

Applying the IHCF adjustment to local exchange services only is consistent with the Commission's previous treatment of high cost fund adjustments. In 1995, the Commission approved a similar adjustment for GTEC and in 1996, the Commission approved Citizens' request for Z-Factor treatment of reduced recovery from the IHCF. In both instances, the adjustments were applied to local exchange services only.

We will adopt the Citizens proposal of \$465,938 for the Interstate High Cost Fund Recovery.

NECA High Cost Fund 2002 True-Up

As discussed in Citizens' 2000 price cap filing, Resolution T-16377, there can be a difference between the actual amount of receipts from NECA and the estimated NECA receipts used to derive the remaining USF amount to be recovered from California ratepayers. An overstatement of USF receipts based upon NECA estimates could result in an over-collection by Citizens, resulting in an over payment by Citizens ratepayers. Just as Citizens is entitled to differences between actual NECA receipts and the USF amount adopted in its 1996 General Rate Case, it is equally responsible for ensuring that any over-collections are appropriately corrected in its price cap filings. The following is an explanation of the NECA procedures for true-ups under the NECA settlement cycle no. 2.1:

2.1 Data Types

Each month participants in the NECA pools submit estimates of their revenues and expenses. As actual data becomes known, companies adjust their data to reflect their actual revenues and costs. For this reason, the common line and traffic sensitive pools operate with a 24-month "open window" in which the exchange carrier can revisit prior months to adjust data. Depending on whether they are reporting current estimated or true-up actual data, exchange carriers can make three types of data entry during a current month cycle: data month

estimate, data month adjustment, or retroactive adjustment.

As ordered in the 2001 price cap Resolution T-16479 (O.P. 3), starting in the 2002 price cap filing, Citizens is required to submit true-up adjustments, in accordance with NECA true-up provisions. Citizens requests a NECA High Cost Fund 2002 True-Up of \$277,626. We will adopt the Citizens proposal of \$277,626 for the NECA High Cost Fund True-Up.

Payphone Deregulation

In Advice Letter No. 719, Citizens requests an ongoing Z-Factor adjustment decrease of \$186,051 to reflect the impact of payphone deregulation.

In its First Report and Order, FCC 96-388, the Matter of Implementation of the Pay Telephone Reclassification and Compensation Provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and in the subsequent Order on Reconsideration, FCC 96-439, the FCC ordered the deregulation of all payphone equipment and the removal of interstate and intrastate payphone subsidies. In relevant part, FCC 96-388 specifies that:

We require, pursuant to the mandate of Section 276(b)(1)(B), incumbent LECs to remove from their intrastate rates any charges that recover the costs of payphones.

Payphones were deregulated on April 15, 1997. Citizens correctly began to include payphone deregulation adjustments starting in the 1998 price cap and continuing as an annual adjustment. In A.99-03-027 Citizens requested no change in its basic NRF structure, and requested that the Commission make no changes in the criteria for exogenous factors (Z-Factors) recoverable by Citizens. In D.00-03-040 the Commission allowed Citizens to continue seeking ongoing adjustment decreases for payphone deregulation of \$186,051. Citizens begins with its 1996 base-year revenue requirements and makes annual adjustments for all ongoing and one-time exogenous events. Each year the company starts with a clean slate. In contrast, the other large LECs reflect changes to their price caps on a year-to-year basis. The telecommunications Division staff has verified that the two approaches produce the same results. The ongoing adjustment decrease of \$186,051 requested by Citizens reflects twelve months of revenue.

We will adopt the Citizens proposed decrease of \$186,051 for payphone deregulation.

Impact of Other Billing and Collection (OB&C)

Citizens requests an ongoing Z-Factor adjustment decrease of \$166,863 to reflect the impact of FCC 80-286 (the OB&C Order). Citizens made annual adjustments to their 1996 base-year revenue requirement for all ongoing and one-time exogenous events. We find reasonable, and will adopt Citizens proposed decrease of \$166,863 for the OB&C Z-Factor adjustment.

This is an uncontested matter in which the resolution grants the relief requested. Accordingly, pursuant to PU Code Section 311 (g) (2), the otherwise applicable 30-day period for public review and comment is being waived.

FINDINGS

1. Advice Letter No. 719 filed on October 2, 2001 by Citizens propose an increase of \$390,650 over its 2001 base-year revenues. The implementation of Citizens 2001 price cap index filing will become effective on January 1, 2002.
2. Citizens Advice Letter No. 719 and its adjustments, supported by workpapers, reflects:
 - a. A GDP-PI factor of 2.30% to adjust its price floors.
 - b. Z-Factor revenue adjustments to reflect exogenous effects not reflected in the GDP-PI:
 - i. NECA High Cost Fund, an ongoing revenue increase of \$465,938.
 - ii. NECA High Cost Fund 2001 True-Up, an ongoing revenue increase of \$277, 626.
 - iii. Payphone Deregulation, an ongoing revenue decrease of \$185,051.
 - iv. OB&C Rule Change, an ongoing revenue decrease of \$166,863.
3. Citizens request for an ongoing revenue adjustment associated with the deregulation of payphone is reasonable.
4. Citizens request for an ongoing revenue adjustment associated with OB&C rule changes is accepted.
5. A total price cap mechanism increase \$390,650, effective January 1, 2002, is justified.
6. Citizens' requested price floor revisions are reasonable.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Citizens Telecommunications Company of California Incorporated shall increase its annual revenue by \$390,650 as a result of its 2002 annual Price Cap Adjustment filing in Advice Letter No. 719.
2. The revisions to Citizens Telecommunications Company of California Incorporated's price floors filed in Advice Letter No. 719 are adopted, and shall be implemented on January 1, 2002.

This Resolution is effective today.

I hereby certify that the Public Utilities Commission adopted this Resolution at its regular meeting on December 11, 2001. The following Commissioners approved it:

/s/ WESLEY M. FRANKLIN

WESLEY M. FRANKLIN
Executive Director

LORETTA M. LYNCH
President
HENRY M. DUQUE
RICHARD A. BILAS
CARL W. WOOD
GEOFFREY F. BROWN
Commissioners

APPENDIX A
Resolution T-16600

Citizens Telecommunications Company of California Incorporated
2002 Price Cap Filing
(in Whole Numbers)

	Citizens Proposed Revenue Impacts	Adopted Impacts
Ongoing Adjustments		
NECA High Cost Fund	\$ 465,938	\$ 465,938
NECA High Cost Fund 2001 True-Up	\$ 277,626	\$ 277,626
Payphone Deregulation	\$(186,051)	\$(186,051)
Impact of OB&C Order #80-286	\$(166,863)	\$(166,863)
Total	\$ 390,650	\$ 390,650

APPENDIX B
Resolution T-16600

Citizens Telecommunications of California Incorporated
2002 Price Cap Filing
(Adjustments by %)

	Citizens Proposed Surcharge/ Surcredit	Adopted Surcharge/ Surcredit
Access	(0.55%)	(0.55%)
Local	1.30%	1.30%
Toll	(0.55%)	(0.55%)